

Message Text

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ACTION SS-30

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S E C R E T KUWAIT 3921

EXDIS

FOR ASSISTANT SECRETARY SISCO FROM STOLTZFUSS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: OVIP (JOSEPH J. SISCO)

SUBJ: ASSISTANT SECRETARY'S TRAVEL

REF: A) KUWAIT 3915; B) STATE 214128; C) STATE 217002

SUMMARY: FONMIN SABAH BELIEVES THIS IS NOT RPT NOT OPPORTUNE TIME FOR VISIT BY MR. SISCO TO KUWAIT. GOK OBVIOUSLY WORRIED ABOUT REACTION OF PALESTINIANS AND OTHER INCREASINGLY RADICAL FORCES IN KUWAIT AND THAT KUWAIT WOULD SOMEHOW BE DRAWN INTO DIRECT INVOLVEMENT IN CRISIS. END SUMMARY

1. FONMINISTRY UNDERSEC RASHID TELEPHONED ME MORNING NOV 3 TO SAY HE UNDER INSTRUCTIONS INFORM ME THAT, WHILE GOK DID NOT WANT CONVEY IMPRESSION MR SISCO NOT WELCOME, GOK BELIEVED THIS NOT RPT NOT OPPORTUNE TIME FOR HIM TO VISIT KUWAIT. I TOLD RASHID I HAD APPOINTMENT LATER SAME MORNING WITH FONMIN SABAH AND WANTED DISCUSS MATTER THEN.

2. FONMIN RECEIVED ME AT 1:00 P.M. REFERRING TO RASHID'S EARLIER CALL, I SAID I HAD NO SPECIFIC INSTRUCTIONS BUT SPEAKING PERSONALLY, IT SEEMED TO ME THAT IN VIEW ITS IMPORTANCE AS INFLUENTIAL ARAB STATE AND CLOSE WORKING US-KUWAITI RELATIONS, KUWAIT WAS LOGICAL STOP FOR SISCO TO MAKE ON HIS TOUR TO BRIEF AREA GOVERNMENTS ON SECRETARY'S VISITS TO EGYPT AND OTHER KEY MIDEAST STATES IN URGENT PURSUIT OF JUST AND LASTING MIDEAST PEACE.

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3. FONMIN REPLIED HE APPRECIATED SUCH REASONING BUT GOK CONVINCED THIS NOT RPT NOT FAVORABLE TIME FOR VISIT BY MR SISCO. KUWAIT, HE SAID, WAS NOT CONFRONTATION STATE AND BELIEVED IT EXTREMELY

IMPORTANT TO AVOID GIVING IMPRESSION IT INVOLVED IN ANY WAY DIRECTLY WITH CURRENT PROBLEM BETWEEN ISRAEL, EGYPT AND SYRIA. FONMIN SAID KUWAIT WORKING QUIETLY NOW WITH PALESTINIANS AND BELIEVED ITS BEST CONTRIBUTION WOULD BE TO REMAIN UNOBTRUSIVELY ON THIS TRACK. PROGRESS BEING MADE IN CRYSTALLIZING, INIFYING AND MODERATING PALESTINIAN OPINION ON POSSIBLE SETTLEMENT. GOK BELIEVED SISCO VISIT NOW WOULD JEOPARDIZE THIS MAJOR EFFORT AND WOULD ALSO EXPOSE KUWAIT TO SUSPICION THAT IT SOMEHOW BEING BROUGHT INTO THE PICTURE ("THAT WE ARE BEING USED AS A BRIDGE") BETWEEN UNITED STATES AND CONFRONTATION ARABS. KUWAIT WANTED CONTINUE WORK BEHIND SCENES. FONMIN SAID (AND REPEATED THIS POINT SEVERAL TIMES) "WE NOT RPT NOT INSISTING THAT MR SISCO NOT COME AND OF COURSE WE WOULD CERTAINLY NOT REFUSE SEE HIM." HOWEVER, HE ADDED, GOK PERSUADED THAT VISIT AT THIS CRITICAL TIME BOUND TO DO MORE HARM THAN GOOD. FONMIN ADDED THERE WAS ALSO STRONG POSSIBILITY THAT HE WOULD NOT BE IN KUWAIT IN NOV 9-12 PERIOD.

4. I SAID SEEMED TO ME THAT IT WAS PRECISELY AT CRITICAL TIMES, AND WHEN THERE WERE SERIOUS DIFFERENCES OF OPINION, THAT CONTINUED DIALOGUE WAS MOST IMPORTANT. SURELY, I SAID, BRIEF VISIT BY SISCO COULD BE PERFECTLY WELL EXPLAINED IN THIS LIGHT. SUCH CONTACT AFFORDED GOK OPPORTUNITY TO EXPRESS ANY VIEWS OF ITS OWN AS WELL, AND GOK CERTAINLY WOULD NOT NEED TO LEAVE IMPRESSION THAT KUWAIT BEING USED AS TOOL OF ANYONE. SISCO VISIT WAS INTENDED AS BRIEFING EXERCISE PURE AND SIMPLE. I SAID I NOT SURE PERSONALLY THAT USG WOULD UNDERSTAND GOK POSITION ON THIS VISIT.

5. FONMIN REITERATED HE APPRECIATED POINTS I MADE. SISCO WELCOME TO COME, BUT A LATER DATE, NOT NOW. FONMIN ASKED ME HELP HIM MAKE USG UNDERSTAND GOK VIEW THAT VISIT NOW WOULD NOT RPT NOT SERVE PURPOSE OF ENHANCING PROSPECTS FOR PEACE. I TOLD FONMIN I THOUGHT HE MAKING A MISTAKE, BUT I WOULD REPORT HIS COMMENTS.

6. COMMENT: IT QUITE CLEAR KUWAITIS EXTREMELY APPREHENSIVE ABOUT AREA AND LOCAL REACTION, PARTICULARLY THAT OF PALESTINIANS (THERE ARE ABOUT 200,000 OF THEM IN KUWAIT) TO A VISIT BY A HIGH RANKING USG OFFICIAL HERE AT THIS TIME. KUWAITIS DESPERATELY
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TRYING TO AVOID ANY DIRECT INVOLVEMENT IN CRISIS AND VERY AFRAID SUCH VISIT WOULD HAVE EFFECT OF DRAWING THEM INTO VORTEX. MORE-OVER, FONMIN EXPLANATION OF RELUCTANCE RECEIVE YOU AT MOMENT PERHAPS NOT TOTALLY INSINCERE SINCE HE HAS INDEED BEEN TALKING TO PALESTINIANS IN LAST FEW DAYS. (BRIEF REPORT ON THIS BY SEPTTEL.) KUWAITI FEARS ABOUT YOUR VISIT CAN BE LOOKED AT AS GOOD EXAMPLE OF KUWAITI YELLOW-BELLIEDNESS IN FACE OF PALESTINIANS. AT SAME TIME THERE IS AN INTERNAL SECURITY ASPECT ALSO. KUWAIT RULING FAMILY IS RIGHT FROM ITS OWN VIEWPOINT -- AND PERHAPS FROM OURS AS WELL -- IN BEING HIGHLY SENSITIVE TO INTERNAL RADICAL FORCES WHICH HAVE BEEN GREATLY STRENGTHENED AS RESULT MIDEAST CRISIS.

7. REF C JUST RECEIVED. I DOUBT THERE IS MUCH I CAN DO TO CHANGE
HIS MIND BUT I AM WILLING TACKLE FONMIN AGAIN IF YOU WANT ME TO.
STOLTZFUS

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